

MEETING PLANNERS

SUGGESTIONS FOR A GREEN MEETING

Meeting planners, convention centers, hotels, resorts, and others in the meeting and hospitality industry are recognizing that global warming is not a political issue, but moral responsibility facing global civilization. It is up to us to make changes that make a difference.

More and more meeting planners each day are realizing that they have a tremendous opportunity to impact globally and become environmental leaders. Organizations are quickly realizing that Greener meetings can not only make a difference globally, but can also increase visibility, profits, and reputation.

The following list has been provided to offer suggestions of Green items. You will find that you will not be able to introduce all of the items into your meeting ~ some will not work with your meeting planning, budget or objectives and some are just not possible due to your organization's or meeting destination's limitations at this time. However, keep in mind that Going Green is not something you can do over night; however, including 1-2-3 items in to your meeting each year will move you in the right direction.

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING YOUR DESTINATION

- ◇ Select cities that are easy to walk and encourage walking. When walking is an option, reduce frequency of bus route.
- ◇ Select cities with good public transportation systems.

HOTELS, CONVENTION CENTER, SUPERDOME, ARENA, ETC.

Food & Beverage

- ◇ Ask the facility to provide clearly marked recycling containers.
- ◇ Do not use disposable items when possible: all catering plates, cups and glasses to be china or glass. If plastic, they must be washable (biodegradable or compostable is better). NO Styrofoam under any circumstances.

- ◇ Use mugs instead of disposable coffee cups. Provide delegates with an event mug. Ask that they use them each day for coffee/water service. Make sure that mugs will be usable with the facility's beverage service containers (i.e. that they fit under coffee urns). Collect mugs from those who don't want them and donate to a local charity or school. This could also be offered as a sponsorship opportunity.
- ◇ Encourage delegates to use their mugs at facility water coolers. Post signs on water coolers reminding attendees to use their mugs.
- ◇ Understanding that most facilities have contracts in place with beverage companies, work with the facility to understand what kinds of containers are being used for beverage service (glass, bottles cans, etc) Ensure that recycling collection containers are available for the beverage containers being served.
- ◇ Do not serve water bottles. Serving water from large pitchers or containers will save your organization. It prevents the plastic bottles from getting into landfills.
- ◇ Eliminate the use of plastic stir sticks with any beverage service. Reusable spoons should be used at coffee service.
- ◇ Condiments to be served in bulk containers, not individual packets. This includes sugar, creamer, butter, cream cheese, etc.
- ◇ Purchase juice, iced tea, coffee, and water in pitchers or bulk containers.
- ◇ All napkins to be cloth whenever possible. Use coasters instead of cocktail napkins or have cocktail napkins available at bar service but instruct the bartenders not to automatically give them with each drink.
- ◇ All leftover food to be donated to a local food bank when possible.
- ◇ Choose food in season: Choosing food in season in the local area has great benefits. Buying locally grown products helps support the local communities and offers fresher, seasonal and regional choices without the transportation impact. It is also a great way to celebrate the local flavor of the region. Local and organic is certainly the preference if available.
- ◇ Choose food based on your attendees preferences and attrition. Know whether your attendees are early risers. Will they all show up for breakfast or will they show up at the last minute and just grab a cup of coffee? Do they prefer a full meal with dessert or do they like a simple salad and no dessert? Knowing your attendees preferences will save you money and reduce waste. If you don't know their preferences, ask attendees to sign up for meals in advance.
- ◇ Ask to have food served without garnishes or use edible garnishes.
- ◇ Look into providing food composting. Depending upon what local facilities are available, either work with the city or local university to compost food scraps, or offer free booth space/demonstration space in return for a food compositor onsite at the event. If either of these options is not available, check to see if there is a local pig farm that can take food scraps.

- ◇ Do not print catering menus.
- ◇ Box lunches:
 - If box lunches are necessary, choose paper packaging that can be recycled. Make sure recycle bins are provide by the venue.
 - Request bio-plastic as options for plastic disposable-ware. Some providers are: NatureWorkslc.com, Econproducts.com, Worldcentric.org

Sleeping Rooms

- ◇ Ask facility if staff are educated to turn off lights and turn down heating/air conditioning when rooms are unoccupied. Also, during summer months, to close the drapes.
- ◇ The hotels should not replace the amenities daily unless they are gone.
- ◇ Encouraged guests to bring their own toiletries and soap and not to use the hotel's.
- ◇ Ask the facility to provide recycle baskets in each sleeping room.
- ◇ The facility should provide glass cups and ceramic mugs (instead of plastic) for in-room beverages. Cups and mugs should be placed upside down on paper doilies (instead of covering opening with a plastic wrapping).

Miscellaneous

- ◇ Ask the facility to provide clearly marked recycling containers for attendees to use at all catered functions, registration, and especially on the exhibit floor.
- ◇ Ask if the facility has energy efficient lighting throughout the property.
- ◇ Ask if hotel has energy efficiency program and water-conservation program.
- ◇ Facility should use fluorescent light bulbs in guestrooms.
- ◇ Ask the facility to keep meeting space temperatures comfortable but not too extreme with air conditioning and heating.

ONSITE MATERIALS

- ◇ Collect and reuse plastic nametag holders. Purchase environmentally friendly badge holders that are created partially recycled material and are fully recyclable. Hold a prize drawing from the recycled badges.
- ◇ Use reusable signs or recyclable signs.
- ◇ Ask the facility to provide clearly marked recycling containers for attendees to use at all catered functions, registration, and especially on the exhibit floor.
- ◇ Conference material bags to be made from lightweight recyclable material with thought of reuse in mind; tasteful design, subtle sponsor logo.

PRINTED MATERIALS

Event Invitations and Registration

- ◇ Use online invitations instead of printed ones and offer online registration.
- ◇ Use mailing labels with water based adhesives.
- ◇ Consider energy offsets, such as purchasing Green credits when registering that then would be used to buy units of energy in the form of wind power to be released to the grid.
- ◇ Ask attendees to register using your website vs paper.

Advertising/Mailers/Promotional Items

- ◇ Use electronic advertising, promotion, and registration wherever possible.
- ◇ Give event attendees the option to having their names removed from any post-event mailing lists.
- ◇ Make materials self-mailers whenever possible and do not use tab self-mailers unless necessary.
- ◇ Choose reusable promotion products when deciding on pens, bags, shirts and caps. There are beautiful awards made of recycled glass.
- ◇ Reduce the size of the registration brochure and make the rest of the information available on-line.
- ◇ Request that speakers gather business cards and send their presentation materials electronically to interested delegates.
- ◇ Use soy-based inks.
- ◇ Post all meeting changes to the event program online and reduce or eliminate mailings.
- ◇ Sponsor Materials: Ask Sponsors and others who provide materials to abide by the same printing standards you adhere to, i.e. EPA standards for recycled content and avoiding goldenrod or fluorescent colored paper, etc.
- ◇ Avoid printing dates and logos if possible on materials so the materials can be easily reused.
- ◇ Surveys should be handled electronically vs handing out paper evaluation forms at the event.

Handouts

- ◇ Eliminate handouts whenever possible by distributing on disc, flashdrive or making them available on a website. Ask speakers to provide electronic copies of handouts and visual presentations and post them online.
- ◇ When you must use paper, make sure all handouts are:
 - Print on two sides;
 - Use EPA standards for recycled paper content (30% post-consumer recycled content). EPA standards can be found at www.epa.gov;
 - limit use of glossy paper;
 - do not use goldenrod or fluorescent colored paper as it is hard to recycle;
 - Print multiple slides per page;
 - Use soy based ink;
 - Print one handout per table;

TRANSPORTATION

- ◇ Encourage attendees to take the airport shuttle. Give pedometers for attendees and exhibitors to encouraging them to walk instead of using shuttle bus, taxi, or personal Vehicles.
- ◇ Give delegates incentives to travel via public transit, such as free passes or transit route maps.
- ◇ Consider a city that is walkable. Can you walk to the restaurants? Convention center? Hotels?
- ◇ Choose free time activities and meeting venues, such as restaurants and shops that are within walking distance of each other.
- ◇ When transportation is required for delegates, choose vehicles powered by one of the following: electric or hybrid energy, natural gas, propane, methane gas, or ethanol.
- ◇ Consider reducing frequency of shuttle.
- ◇ Contract with a rental car company that has “Green” cars. Hertz has a fleet of “Green cars” and EV Rental Cars is the only rental company in the US to rent only environmental vehicles.
- ◇ Encourage attendees arriving outside of scheduled shuttle hours to take hotel shuttle services instead of taxis.

EXHIBITORS

- ◇ Offer a Green page in your exhibitor kit to encourage exhibitors to follow your Green policy. List your Green policies for promotional materials and ask that they adhere to them.

Recycle

- ◇ Ask exhibitors to reuse the boxes they shipped so that can be reused for return shipments.
- ◇ Ask exhibitors to minimize trash by reusing packing materials.
- ◇ Ask exhibitor to empty them at large recycling stations in the hall.
- ◇ Provide exhibitors with maps of the recycling stations available during the exhibit hours and where the stations can be found during teardown. Have these areas identified on the floorplan of the exposition hall that is printed in the program. Have staff walk around and personally deliver maps and explain the recycling program. If this is not doable, give maps out at Exhibitor Registration.
- ◇ Work with General Contractor on placement of large bins so that they will not be in the way during move-out.
- ◇ Develop a “check-out” system reminding exhibitors to recycle any materials not being sent back or letting volunteers know that any materials left can be recycled.
- ◇ Develop a recognition program for “Green” exhibitors. Develop criteria to recognize participating exhibitors. Recognize participating exhibitors at the next year’s event via special signage at their booth, mention in the program book or other signage displayed during the show.

Giveaways

- ◇ Offer a donation program to your exhibitors for left over materials. Ask exhibitors to donate their remaining products after the show to a charity you select (local shelters or schools). Create a recognition program for each participating exhibitor, i.e. place placards at each exhibitor’s booth that agrees to participate; list the participating exhibitors in your onsite newsletters, etc.)
- ◇ Ask exhibitors to only offer environmentally responsible giveaways and/or reusable items or items made from recycled materials.

Collateral

- ◇ Ask exhibitors to bring a minimum number of collateral to the show; share the number of delegates so exhibitors don’t bring large amounts which end up being thrown away after the show; ask exhibitors to encourage delegates to visit their website for information.
- ◇ Avoid printing dates on materials so the materials can be easily reused.

General Contractors

- ◇ Ask your contractor to use exhibit hall table coverings and wastebasket liners made from 100% corn that is 100% biodegradable, compostable and polyethylene-free.
- ◇ Work with contractor to eliminate non-reusable materials (draping for tables, etc) or see if they can be used by local schools, etc.
- ◇ Ask your contractor to use carpet padding made from 100-percent recycled synthetic fibers.
- ◇ Do not use standard paper exhibitor kits. Exhibitor kits can be made available on CD or even better, make available on the website. All ordering should take place online, instead of paper.
- ◇ Ask your contractor to use cardboard-style wastebaskets made of recycled natural products.
- ◇ Does your contractor use muslin drapes, produced from cotton, for exhibit back walls and side rail drape?

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT COMPANIES

- ◇ If working with a DMC, ask them if they have established detailed environmental polices and a strategy to being environmentally responsible. Their strategy could include items such as:
 1. Using laptops when possible (on average they use 10% less energy than desktop computers);
 2. Using LCD rather than CRT monitors
 3. Encouraging employees to turn off equipment and lighting, and turn down thermostats when leaving for extended periods of time.
 4. Using inkjet printers rather than laser printers as they use less energy.
 5. Use equipment that can print on both sides of paper .
 6. Use multi-purpose office equipment (i.e., all-in-one fax, printer, scanner, and copier). These generally require less energy and space than their individual counterparts.
 7. Shift written communications to e-mail. i.e., rooming lists and layouts, event orders, settlement of accounts and other contractual documentation.
 8. When printing is required; use double-sided copies and post-consumer recycled content paper with soy-based ink.
 9. Minimize the use of costly new packing supplies by reusing boxes and packing materials.
 10. Save directional, food and beverage, and other generic signs for reuse.
 11. Reuse nametags made of recycled content and provide 'reuse' collection bins for them.
 12. Occasionally use regular mail, rather than bulk discounted mail, to ensure that mailing lists are valid which can reduce waste.

13. Use of technology to cut down on printing and shipping needs.
 14. Email communications to clients and vendors.
 15. Create a conference website to offer electronic registration and confirmation to promote the event, offering electronic registration, and providing the event itinerary.
- ◇ Include a clause in the contract with the vendor/property that states their commitment to comply with the event organizer's environmental requests.
 1. Recycling program includes paper, metal, glass and plastic products.
 2. Staff is instructed to shut blinds, turn off lights, and turn down the heat/air conditioning when rooms are vacant.
 - ◇ Reduce paper usage as much as possible
 1. For materials that need to be printed print on double-sided, post-consumer recycled paper using vegetable-based/soy inks.
 2. Request the hotel/venue provides Banquet Event Orders (BEO) and rooming lists electronically.
 - ◇ When working with Event Venues, ask the DMC to coordinate and ask:
 - 1) Does the event venue practice recommended green practices?
 - 2) Enforce an energy management program to reduce consumption of electricity.
 - 3) Enforce a purchasing policy to obtain re-useable linens, dishes and cutlery and environmentally friendly products and cleaning supplies.
 - 4) Ensure that venues turn off lights and air when not in use.

Transportation Selection

- ◇ Encourage the use of low-impact transportation (i.e., walking, biking, mass transit) which reduces energy consumption and emissions.
- ◇ Ask the transportation company if they follow environmentally responsible maintenance and recycle used oil, batteries, antifreeze and tires.
- ◇ Ask providers if they train drivers to minimize idling and the use of air conditioners, especially when no passengers are in the vehicle.
- ◇ Ensure staff is informed of the event planning environmental strategies and initiatives.
- ◇ Producing shuttle and transportation programs that have effective carbon emissions control.

Food & Beverage Providers

- ◇ When possible, provide food and beverages that are: locally grown, in-season and organic.
- ◇ Provide bulk dispensers for water, beverages, sugar, salt, pepper, cream and other condiments.
- ◇ Install a customized 3-bin-separated waste containers at all concessions and food service locations.
- ◇ Replace non-recyclable Styrofoam cups and plates with plastic and glass.
- ◇ Arrange to have leftover unserved food donated to a local food bank or soup kitchen, or separate it for pick up by a composting operation or local farm.
- ◇ Enforce the use of re-useable linens, dishes and cutlery and environmentally friendly cleaning products.

MISCELLANEOUS

- ◇ Organize a green community service project such as cleaning up an area or planting trees to offset carbon emissions.
- ◇ Consider energy offsets, such as purchasing Green credits when registering that then would be used to buy units of energy in the form of wind power to be released to the grid.

EVALUATING YOUR SUCCESS

- ◇ Track and measure your efforts.
- ◇ Share your efforts and accomplishments with your executive leadership and attendees.
- ◇ Place information on your website promoting your organization's Green initiative.

RESOURCES

- ◇ www.greenloding.newscom
- ◇ www.environmentallyfriendlyhotels.com
- ◇ www.greenhotels.com
- ◇ www.usgbc.org
- ◇ EPA standards can be found at: www.epa.gov.
- ◇ Choose seafood from the “best Choices” list on Seafood Watch list:
www.mbayaq.org/cr/seafoodwatch/web/sfw_regional.aspx
- ◇ Bio-plastic providers are: NatureWorksllc.com, Econproducts.com,
Worldcentric.org
- ◇ Food donation suggestions:
www.pcam.org/source/community/network/usa/how/food.asp or
www.secondharvest.org
- ◇ MeetGreen calculator: meetgreen.com